
SELMAYR PREPARES NEW 'COUP' AGAINST URSULA VON DER LEYEN

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Martin Selmayr, secretary-general of the European Commission and Jean-Claude Junckers protege, whose coup-like rise earned him a few enemies in Brussels, will resign from his post at the end of this week. However, before that, he will be settling a few staffing issues. EURACTIV's media partner Wirtschaftswoche reports.

Last year, European Commission President Jean-Claude Junckers trusted confidant organised his own rise in the European Commission. Selmayr set it up in such a dubious way that MEPs termed it a coup-like action.

Before leaving the European Commission at the end of the week, the lawyer ensured that some of his most faithful staff were given a career boost. An EU diplomat even spoke of it as Operation Evening Sun.

In Brussels, there had long been talks of Selmayr compiling a list of confidants to be promoted to higher positions before Junckers term came to an end. Now, the list has become shorter and does not only contain the names of Selmayr's friends.

All in all, however, this is a slight to Ursula von der Leyen, who will succeed Juncker in November. To determine staffing issues a few months before Junckers successor takes office is creating new facts for the next Commission. It could also be interpreted as an unfriendly act.

First of all, Selmayr has planned his own career, which has now taken an unanticipated turn. Christian MEPs from Germany's Christian Democratic Party (CDU) had forced von der Leyen to drop Selmayr before her election. Otherwise, at least 20 MEPs would have refused to vote, which would have cost her the presidency.

Sources suggest that even the German Chancellery intervened so that Selmayr would not maintain his position in the new Commission.

Starting in November, Selmayr will lead the EU representation in Vienna, an unspectacular position for an alpha animal like him. In Brussels, his new appointment is viewed as a cooling pond before he goes on to the next challenge.

The list indicates that German EU commissioner Günther Oettinger, who is in charge of the budget and human resources, only accepted it because it was not only the members of Selmayr's trusted staff that were promoted in the end.

Oettingers former head of cabinet, Michael Köhler, has been promoted to deputy director-general for humanitarian operations. The Arab studies expert, whose competence is widely appreciated in the Commission, lead Oettingers cabinet for three years after having just arrived in Brussels. Even Koen Doens, who has been promoted to director-general for development aid, is not known for his proximity to Selmayr.

Selmayrs confidante, on the other hand, is the Bulgarian Jivka Petkova, who will become the acting director in the EU Commissions General Secretariat. Petkova had worked in the von der Leyens transition team, which had been staffed by officials hand-picked by Selmayr.

In Brussels, it is now eagerly awaited who will be part of Ursula von der Leyens team. She will need experts with experience in the EU machinery. In particular, the post of their head of cabinet is regarded as crucial.

After taking up her duties in November, von der Leyen will also have to fill the post of the secretary-general. According to speculations in Brussels, the job could go to a Frenchman or a Frenchwoman.

[Edited by Zoran Radosavljevic]

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